her husband to give the things requested. He also stated the time at which he would come to the lodge to be received by her husband. 539 773 778

At the appointed time the Beaver came out of the lake and appeared before the lodge, but, before he entered, requested that the lodge be purified with incense. Then he entered. They smoked. After a while the Beaver began to sing a song in which he asked for the skin of a certain bird. When he had finished, the man arose and gave him the bird-skin. Then the Beaver sang another song, in which he asked for the skin of another bird, which was given to him. Thus he went on until he had secured all the skins in the man's lodge. In this way the man learned all the songs that belonged to the Beaver's Medicine and also which songs belonged to which skins.

After this time the man got together all the different kinds of bird and animal skins taken by the Beaver, made them up into a Bundle, and kept the Beaver Medicine.

Owners of Beaver Bundles were known as Beaver Men. They were always the learned ones among our People. A Beaver Man had to have a fantastic memory to be able to sing the four hundred or more songs in proper sequence. He had to be a man who lived very much in harmony with nature to know the sounds and actions of the many birds and animals within the Bundle, and to be able to coach the participants to repeat those sounds and actions during the ceremonies. Beaver Men learned all the Ways of nature. The People looked to them for knowledge about weather, seasons, plants, birds and animals, and calendar histories (called winter counts) of the tribe. 778 793 [533] [82]

In the Old Days, a Beaver Bundle contained examples of the most important parts of all our other sacred Bundles—a Medicine Pipe, a Natoas headdress, a sacred tobacco-planting outfit, as well as all the various skins. As a result, Beaver Men usually knew all the ceremonies for these other [796]

sary in the ceremony, or because people were uncertain which skins were missing or how to replace them. Clearly, the People no longer had the intimate knowledge of nature that had been required of Beaver Men in the long-ago. 778 178 [82]

Mrs. Walters itemizes the "bird and animal skins" of the main Bundle: 778 237

Crow—whole skin—somewhat decayed—identified.
Common loon—whole skin, stuffed slightly
Common loon—whole skin, stuffed slightly, possibly male and female
Western grebe [a type of water bird]
Western grebe—with blue beads for eyes
Little brown crane. Some stuffing in body. Not in good repair.
Sand hill crane—bad repair—some stuffing in head and body—legs missing
American merganza [merganser]—whole skin
Whistling swan—complete skin
Eastern kittiwake [a type of gull]
Eastern hairy woodpecker, male, very fragmentary
Head of male ruddy duck, sewn to body of a western grebe, curious bag-like body—made by sewing into grebe skin a piece of cloth (in breast)
Buffalo head duck—entire
Part—skin of ruddy duck—male—as bag for tobacco—or to be slipped over hand [412]
Composite pigeon skin—body well stuffed and head missing
Head of western grebe
Head of heron or horned grebe, identification not possible, rose colored globular beads for eyes.
Hybrid red-shafted flicker, eyes of blue beads —repairs with cloth and thongs
Foot of western grebe
Part of pin tail duck—no head—fragmentary condition

[Backside-To-The Fire Pipe Opening Ceremony, 1972]

hot summer. We knew that we would not be very comfortable after wrapping our wool blankets around ourselves. Tradition requires participants in holy ceremonies to cover themselves with a robe or blanket to show modesty and respect before the Holy Spirits. At most Medicine Pipe ceremonies, this tradition is mainly followed by current Medicine Pipe Owners and by the leader of the ceremony. Others wear blankets only while dancing with one of the sacred objects from the Bundle. However, a few people ignore tradition and go without their blankets altogether. 796 292 778

To complete our preparations for the ceremony, we took the shell necklaces and bead bracelets from the rawhide paint-and-accessory bag of our Bundle and put them on. Medicine Pipe Owners and their families used to wear these symbols all the time. Now most people wear them only to ceremonies. They serve as a constant reminder of the main elements of nature: shells to represent water; blue beads to represent the sky; thongs to represent animals; and a coating of sacred red paint to represent Earth. 778 796 301 [793] [82]

We heard the voice of NinnaOnesta again, announcing that the ceremony was about to begin. We wrapped ourselves in our blankets (Wolf Child and me; women generally wear theirs over their shoulders) and immediately we became very hot! How it must have been in the Old Days when many of our People dressed like that every day, wearing a buffalo robe or wool blanket as outer garments and buckskin or wool clothing underneath! They had deep convictions in our customs to find happiness despite physical discomfort. 778 796 [292] [291] [178]

The Elk Tipi was a large yellow-painted lodge with the head and horns of a buffalo painted over the front doorway. Hoof tracks decorated both sides. The tipi belonged to Richard Little Dog, who led Medicine Pipe ceremonies among the South Piegans in Montana. Jim Twig borrowed this tipi for his ceremony, because it could accommodate many people. A second tipi 778 796 346 [532] [422] [426]

[p. 133-A]

Teachings of Nature

One day during the Sun Dance Encampment, Atsitsina and I went north of the camp to where the Buttes dip down close to the brush and the tree-lined Belly River. He had said that we would find there a variety of plants and that we would see many birds and animals. 124

Atsitsina told me he could remember many plants his father had used as a doctor. I, too, could recall Mokakin and our Old Man using various plants to doctor people successfully. As is the case with our sacred Bundles, these men received their doctoring Ways through dreams. However, there are many plants that we call "everybody's medicines," which are used in daily life and do not require dreams or special Teachings to be effective. 278 [756] [787] [184]

Unfortunately, much of the old-time knowledge has been lost since the time our People lived completely in harmony with nature. Many of our Old People, however, still are familiar with the ancient names of birds and animals, and know how to recognize them by sound and sight; and they know the names of certain stars and constellations, and the ancient legends surrounding them. And so, those of us who wish to follow these Ways are thankful for the knowledge that does remain. 82

EDIBLE PLANTS

Unlike many other tribes, our People never practiced any form of agriculture other than the cere- 241 [249]

[p. 180-A]